



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION
PO BOX 2870
PORTLAND OR 97208-2870

JUL 14 2006

Missouri River Basin Water Management Division

Dear Interested Missouri River Parties:

Development of a broadly based participatory process for Missouri River recovery involving Federal agencies, Tribes, states, and nongovernmental stakeholders was recommended by the National Academies of Science in their 2002 report: "The Missouri River Ecosystem, Exploring the Prospects for Recovery." The concept of a Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) was further advanced during Endangered Species Act consultation between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Corps of Engineers (Corps) in 2003. In its March 2004 Record of Decision for the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual (Master Manual), the Corps committed to develop a MRRIC with representation from the full range of Basin stakeholders.

To help ensure the success of the MRRIC, the Corps, USFWS, and other Federal Agencies in the Missouri River Basin have chosen to work closely with the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) in developing a framework plan for the establishment of the MRRIC. The U.S. Institute, via contract with CDR and Associates, facilitated the development of a Situational Assessment for MRRIC, which was made public in April of this year.

The Corps and the USFWS are committed to the establishment of an effective MRRIC to provide recommendations regarding recovery of Missouri River species and the ecosystem upon which they depend. The Situational Assessment recommended that key Federal agencies take on a strong leadership role in guiding initial decisions regarding the establishment of the MRRIC. Responding to those recommendations, in May 2006, the Corps and USFWS sought formal assistance from the Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable (MRBIR). Most of the Federal agencies with Endangered Species Act responsibilities related to water resources in the Missouri River Basin are members of MRBIR. Subsequently, the MRBIR appointed a Federal Working Group to develop a draft Proposed Framework for Establishing MRRIC. This Proposed Framework is intended to serve as a starting point for discussions and further development of the MRRIC through engagement with basin stakeholders.

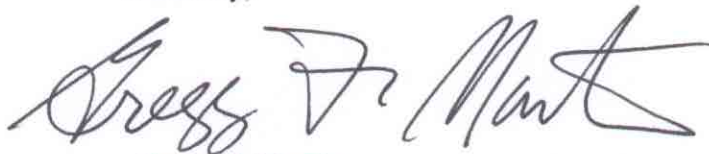
The Federal Working Group, with direct assistance from the U.S. Institute, is developing the Proposed Framework. Key elements of the Proposed Framework will include the Federal agencies' preliminary initial framework for MRRIC, identification of the constraints and sideboards that have a bearing on the efforts of MRRIC, the purpose, scope, and authority of the MRRIC, and the proposed steps, sequencing, and timeline for establishing the MRRIC.

Another component of the Proposed Framework will be the establishment of an initial MRRIC Planning Committee composed of ex officio representation by Federal, Tribal, state, and local governments and appointed representatives of the range of basin stakeholders, as well as a Chairperson. The Proposed Framework will offer suggestions regarding the functions of the Planning Committee, numbers and categories of Planning Committee members, the process for selection of the Chairman and Planning Committee members, travel reimbursement support for Planning Committee members, and proposed Operating Protocols for the Planning Committee. It is envisioned that the primary task of the interim MRRIC Planning Committee would be to develop recommendations for the official Charter of the MRRIC.

The MRBIR has tasked the Federal Working Group to complete the draft Proposed Framework this summer and to then immediately begin informal discussions with Tribes, states, and stakeholders, as well as conduct public workshops to seek feedback on the Proposed Framework. Following revisions to the draft Proposed Framework based on the feedback received, the Corps and USFWS, in coordination with the MRBIR will adopt a final initial framework for MRRIC development and proceed with convening the proposed MRRIC Planning Committee, as quickly as possible.

We appreciate your patience and understanding of the importance to take the time needed to develop the MRRIC in the fair, open, and participatory manner necessary to build the foundation for successful long-term collaboration. I invite and strongly encourage your active participation in upcoming discussions and public meetings to establish the MRRIC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregg F. Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregg" being the most prominent.

Gregg F. Martin
Brigadier General, US Army
Division Commander